

Library funding: Adequate financial support for African university funding. John Willemse

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Funding university libraries in the East, Central and Southern Africa (ECS) region, as elsewhere on the continent, has been of great concern to university library administrators, managers and users. The International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) took the bull by the horns and decided, "to develop, formulate and finalize guidelines, norms and standards, suitable for practical application by university librarians/libraries." The strategies were to examine and recommend what percentage of the host university budget should go to the library; what percentage of the students' fees should be apportioned to the library; which income-generating activities would be undertaken by the library; and the system to control university library funds. To study the status quo and establish possible solutions, INASP commissioned Professor John Willemse, a LIS educator, renowned academic library manager, prolific writer and with a long experience of IFLA, particularly the section on university libraries. He undertook a survey of the university libraries in the ECS region from which certain findings were established. Recommendations derived from these findings are fully discussed in the respective chapters of this book.

The theme of the book revolves around the truism that good libraries are essential for good universities and therefore need good funding. The book first reviews university library funding at the global level before examining the current state in the ECS region, and at the continental level. It further discusses important related issues, including required standards and norms as a means to influence the authorities to improve funding; the library budget in relation to the host university, either in terms of the definition as a percentage of the university budget or as the university's actual expenditure; a percentage of students' tuition fees for the purpose of developing the library; and the libraries generating their own funds so that they are not solely dependent on university funding.

The major finding is that most of the university libraries in the ECS region are inadequately funded. The most enticing section of the book is Chapter 11, which features the recommendations.

The general recommendation concerns the recognition of the indispensability of the library to the university, the need for autonomy of university libraries, regular collection of library statistics, and the need for approval by the AAU of the terminology applicable in university libraries. Other recommendations include the adoption of standards as guidelines and performance measurements; and income generation schemes to supplement the inadequate library funding and minimise the dependency on funding from the university. Other alternatives for funding, such as donors, should be explored.

The book uses minimum professional jargon and is therefore very clear and easy to read. It has comprehensive and up-to-date references and an Appendix featuring action plans related to university library finance and sustainability passed at SCANUL-ECS Conferences.

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